

Secretary Schneider's Oral Testimony; House T&I Committee

Chairman and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to you on behalf of Illinois Governor Pat Quinn concerning An Update on the High-Speed and Intercity-Passenger-Rail Program.

I want to thank the Members of this Committee, the entire Congress, and the Obama administration for supporting a healthy intercity-passenger-rail system, for your leadership on freight rail infrastructure needs and for supporting improved rail service with words and money. We are grateful for the investments from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which have provided more than \$1.4 billion for Illinois high-speed rail.

These current investments in the Illinois high-speed passenger rail system already are providing economic benefits with much more on the way, and we could not do it without federal help. **We need continued federal funding for high speed rail so that we can finish the job we have started and keep our promises to taxpayers.** These investments will continue to pay dividends, and the American people deserve no less. **We ask that Congress appropriate additional funds for states making these investments, including Illinois.**

What would have been the destiny of Illinois and the entire Midwest had the nation's rail system not been centered in Illinois in the mid-nineteenth century? Very simply, neither Illinois nor the Midwest would be the transportation hub of the nation that it is today, and the state's diverse economic base would not exist as we know it. Fortunately, Illinois was made the center of national rail development, and today, Illinois hosts a 7,000-mile rail network that serves as a keystone in moving passengers and freight across the nation.

Passenger-rail service is crucial to Illinois' multi-modal transportation network, and has never been more important than today. Illinois helps fund 28 Amtrak trains serving four high-use corridors from Chicago to Milwaukee and St. Louis; and in-state to Quincy and Carbondale to the west and south. Those trains carried a record 2.2 million passengers in the last year.

Ridership growth in Illinois has been exceptional, up more than 74 percent overall since 2006, and up on the Chicago to St. Louis Corridor by 224 percent. This increasing public demand is why we were proud to debut higher-speed service in October on the Dwight-to-Pontiac segment with Secretary LaHood and Governor Quinn on the train. By Thanksgiving, we were delivering that same 110-mph experience to regular Amtrak passengers every day.

Intercity passenger rail already is stimulating development on the corridor in cities like Normal, where a new multi-modal station already has attracted \$200 million in related private investments, and beginning in Joliet where construction of a multi-modal station is under way. Plans also include new or improved stations for six other cities on the corridor.

Illinois and Midwest collaboration on high-speed rail began in 1980, but gained traction in the 1990s, when a 10-state Midwest Regional Rail Initiative did joint studies of staged development for high-speed rail to upgrade existing track, add passenger rail frequencies and use new technologies to enable faster, safer passenger trains on existing rail corridors.

With years of solid planning in place, Illinois and its Midwest partners were ready to move quickly on April 16, 2009, when President Obama called for a national network of connected high-speed rail corridors. Secretary LaHood properly compared the President's vision to the 1950s blueprint for building the U.S. Interstate system.

The Federal Railroad Administration awarded Illinois \$1.2 billion in January 2010 to upgrade to 110-mph, passenger-rail service between Dwight and the East St. Louis area. **Governor Quinn made Illinois a full partner in the vision with his commitment of \$400 million in state funds for high-speed rail from his \$31 billion capital program, Illinois Jobs Now!**

Federal awards that year also provided funding to construct a key rail flyover in Englewood on Chicago's south side to help improve mobility, and to help augment high-speed service for Chicago-St. Louis, and for the Chicago-Detroit Corridor, the next expected high-speed route in the Midwest. Illinois has invested \$200,000 in state funds on the Tier 1 study for that corridor in cooperation with Michigan.

Work is progressing to provide needed Positive Train Control by Fall 2015, which will enable high-speed service to commence on almost 75 percent of the 285-mile Chicago to St. Louis corridor, reducing overall travel time by an hour.

Our improvements also enable the use of locomotives at speeds up to 125 miles per hour, and provide the infrastructure base to move to 125 miles per hour as it makes sense in the future.

Illinois has completed its study to help resolve environmental issues between Chicago and St. Louis and add high-speed frequencies. This study, now under FRA review, and additional corridor studies under way will help position Illinois to compete for additional high-speed funding needed to complete project objectives and trim overall travel times to less than 4 hours by 2020.

Clearly, Illinois is still moving quickly on its high-speed vision, a vision Governor Quinn shares with President Obama as a key component of a world class national rail system. We have a lot of work to do, but we are confident in our strong state-federal partnership. The Interstate highway system developed steadily over time, and so will our high-speed passenger rail network. With fuel prices near historic highs, we must find energy-efficient ways to meet future travel demands. We simply cannot build enough roads to ease current and expected traffic congestion.

Our focus on higher-speed passenger rail service establishes a foundation for America's rail renaissance in support of local job creation and private development around new stations. Again, we are most grateful for our partnership with Congress and the Obama administration. Please let me reiterate: **Continued federal funding and support for this vision of national high-speed rail service has never been more critical than it is right now.** Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.